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Results of a national survey of domestic summer foreign language programs for elementary and secondary students are the basis for information on summer schools, workshops, and camps. A description of a cultural immersion-type camp run by Concordia College receives significant attention. Other camps, including those for disadvantaged or potential language dropout students, are described, as well as several different kinds of summer schools, workshops and festivals, college courses that accept some secondary school students, enrichment programs, and televised instruction. Special benefits of summer programs and camps are pointed out. A brief bibliography is included. (AF)

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Number 10

Summer Foreign Language Programs for School Students

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A Focus Report on . . .

Summer Foreign Language Programs for School Students

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IN THE PAST, very few Americans have had the opportunity to participate in an organized educational experience during the summer. Summer schools, which were primarily conducted in metropolitan areas, focussed on make-up programs for students who had not done well during the regular school year. Summer foreign language classes shared this description, providing a rerun of the previous years' courses on hot summer days. The motivation to enroll in a summer school course was negative; a punishment for having done poorly the year before.

Increasingly, students are realizing that summer school can provide an excellent opportunity to study a foreign language. This positive motivation produces the enthusiasm and zest which is necessary for a successful classroom environment. This has occurred, in part, because of the variety and growth of summer school foreign language course offerings.

Before reviewing some of the programs that are currently being offered, I would like to discuss the advantages of summer study.

During the academic year, a crowded curriculum may make foreign language study a difficult choice for a student. Full academic programs and abundant extracurricular activities provide impressive competition. These pressures and demands on student time do not exist during the summer.

While curriculum pressures limit students' choices, a teacher shortage presents another handicap. Many small schools have just such a problem. Summer programs can draw from the reservoir of foreign language teachers who are not engaged in advanced study or travel. Furthermore, foreign language students from colleges and universities, whether prospective teachers or not, provide an impressive supply of supplementary teaching staff.

A third plus for summer programs is the fact that students are away from many academic pressures or distracting influences. Indeed, some summer programs capitalize on this fact and are conducted on a basis of total student involvement and total time commitment.

Educational facilities, equipment, and resources are not utilized fully during the summer at many schools. A foreign language teacher could take advantage of the fact that projectors, recorders, videotape equipment, and similar aids may be more available. Special-purpose rooms such as language laboratories, theaters, or auditoriums, material preparation centers, and libraries will also be more readily accessible.

Greater freedom from a traditional time schedule is an important factor in summer programs. Indeed, the time flexibility is a feature that is easily underestimated. Lessons need not be limited to certain times, certain blocks of time, or certain days. Time flexibility can enable the academically talented students to do research or accelerated study which will challenge their ability to the fullest. Less-talented students may have the time to work on other tasks which were impossible during the school year.

The advantages of summer study are limitless. Summer months offer special outdoor opportunities necessary to some programs. Air-conditioned facilities, now becoming commonplace, might help attract students. Fine arts facilities can often be utilized.

Foreign study programs are perhaps one of the fastest growing areas of foreign language study. This important field offers excellent

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opportunities to increasing numbers of students. However, direct contact with people in other nations doesn't necessarily offer a desirable educational experience. One needs to be cautious in recommending or participating in any of the many existing programs, or initiating a new program. Guidelines intended to help students, parents, and teachers in selecting programs have been prepared by state departments of education and are available from them.[1] Because the area of foreign study programs is so vast, readers interested in the topic are referred to another Focus Report specifically devoted to the topic.[2]

To what extent are domestic summer foreign language programs available to elementary and secondary students? What is the nature of summer programs now offered? A survey of state foreign language consultants was made during the summer of 1968. The following information was obtained from the survey of these foreign language leaders at state departments of education. Not all states had a state official at the time of the survey, and replies were not received from four states. Detailed descriptions of summer programs will not be undertaken. Rather, some indication of the variety of programs will be attempted.

Officials from at least thirty-eight states report summer opportunities for elementary or secondary school children to study a foreign language in an organized program within their state. By far, the most frequently listed type of program was summer classroom instruction in the school. Thirty-one states reported the presence of such programs. A preponderance of the programs are located in eastern states. Some of the programs were reported as remedial; others are for exploration or advanced study. Many programs have been funded by Federal programs.

It might be expected that the typical summer foreign language program would be in a school and offered by a school district. On the other hand, it is far from the only type of program. The Chicago Board of Education sponsors "Summer Foreign Language Day Houses" for students of French, German, and Spanish. High school students meet for four hours daily for a period of eight weeks. In addition to intensive language practice, participants take tours, hear lectures, attend concerts, eat at French, German, or Mexican restaurants, prepare dramatic skits, edit a newspaper, and are engaged in numerous related activities.

Colorado's Jefferson County Schools have summer programs in French and Spanish which offer high school students something different from the usual course of foreign language study. Cooking, art criticism, sports, music, nature study, and architecture (studied in the language) are listed as components of the curriculum.

The Northwood Institute, West Baden, Indiana, offers a one-week José Greco workshop for students in Spanish arts. Previously devoted to the study of dance primarily, it may be enlarged to offer language instruction as well as additional study in the arts.

Festivals sponsored by ethnic-group societies involving language, culture, and personalities were reported in many states. Some last up to one week, offering rich opportunities for culture and language learning. A number of school systems offer languages in the summer that are not commonly taught during the school year. Russian, Chinese, and Japanese are among the offerings.

A number of colleges will accept high school students in regular summer courses. Sometimes deferred credit is available. That is, students do not receive college credit until they graduate from high school. In many cases, such courses are open only to superior secondary students who have a recommendation from their high school. College courses include those reported by the University of Nebraska, Washington State University, the University of Georgia, and Delaware State College.

Other kinds of programs, reported by responding state consultants, are representative of the variety that is currently available. The Fort Worth, Texas, school district has a summer enrichment program in Spanish and French. Selected students practice language skills with a staff of native speakers. In New Hampshire, a group of students from Germany

[1] Guidelines were prepared for the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages by Dr. Stephen A. Freeman of Middlebury College, and were adopted by that organization in 1966. Reprinted in Leamon, see below.

[2] Phillip Leamon, "Foreign Study for High School Students: What's Going On?" (New York: ACTFL, 1969). Focus Report Number 5, available for $.25 from the Materials Center, 62 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y. 10011.

were hosted in homes for a two-week period during the summer. Many foreign students at college campuses are similarly hosted in the summer months. For two years, Greenville, North Carolina, High School has hosted an academic center for Latin American Studies. High school students with three years of Spanish are eligible for the six-week program. Curriculum includes Latin American civilization, geography, government, literature, as well as Spanish conversation and composition.

Only four state consultants reported summer televised foreign language instruction. Interest in increased use of television was expressed. In Louisiana, for example, the legislature passed a bill authorizing French educational and cultural television programs. Suggested programs would be a part of a French Acadian Renaissance with broad educational and cultural implications.

Finally, the foreign language camp idea seems widespread. Thirteen state consultants report at least one language camp in operation in their states. At least nine other consultants specified language camps as a needed and desired addition to the state program in foreign languages. Sponsors of language camps are indeed varied. School districts, colleges, park boards, ethnic societies, private schools, and private enterprise are frequently sponsors.

Sites for these programs are hardly limited to woodland or lake shore locations. A simulated cultural setting is also possible on a college campus, ranch, or farm. Programs are offered for children whose ages span the years of elementary and secondary education. The length of sessions ranges up to eight weeks' duration. Language camps reportedly are offered in French, German, Norwegian, Russian, and Spanish. While many camps require no prior language learning, others insist on (up to the prerequisite) three years of study.

The notion of "cultural immersion" is characteristic of the language camp concept. A brief description of the earliest nonprofit language camp, conducted by Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, will serve to illustrate the concept. Weeks before the two-week language camp is scheduled to commence, accepted students receive their "passport" and other necessary documents and information. Thus, their interest is aroused and attention is directed toward the anticipated experience. When the first day arrives, students converge on the camp to become "foreigners." They have their passport stamped and immunization record checked. New foreign names are adopted, foreign money is exchanged, and residence is taken up in a building identified by the name of a region or province of the foreign country.

For two weeks, language instruction is conducted daily, complemented by activities as diverse as the interests of any typical school-age youngsters. Language learnings are quickly reinforced by use at mealtime, at the camp store or post office, on the camp radio, or in the foreign language newspaper. Dramatic skits, original productions, and musical presentations utilize still other language skills. Festivals are planned and developed. Birthdays are celebrated in typical fashion. Table manners and other social customs are adopted. Only the creativity of the staff and campers limits the variety of possibilities. A Montmartre area was created at a French camp recently. Original sketches were sold by camper artists while other campers sat in an improvised outdoor restaurant, listening to a strolling musician. Students at another camp reenacted typical Christmas season events. Student government, after the nature of national government, was arranged at still another camp. Campers have become shopkeepers, bankers, actors, journalists, waiters, politicians, theater managers, and even announcers, all important roles in the function of the camp. Get-togethers around the campfire, flag ceremonies, and folk dancing help to further diversify the program while also providing themes which develop camp spirit.

The staff is headed by a camp dean who is a master language teacher. Other experienced teachers help provide a solid core of experienced instruction. Language students ranging from graduate level to superior high school students provide an extensive staff. In addition to providing instruction, each faculty member sharpens his language skills and learns something about effective foreign language instruction from the experienced staff people.

The program offered by Concordia College has rapidly expanded, from one German camp with seventy-five students in 1961 to ten sessions, five languages, and enrollment of over 800. The newest addition was another French

session offered at a dude ranch in Montana. While the Concordia Camps are self-supporting, two grants from the Hill Family Foundation have made curriculum study and improvement possible.[3]

Other language camps vary in plan and purpose. Spanish and French language camps offered by the School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont, provide six weeks of cross-cultural studies followed by two weeks in Mexico or Canada. Students live with a host family and a "sister" or "brother" and learn about the country with the assistance of their hosts.

The Minneapolis Schools have operated a summer camp for culturally disadvantaged students from junior high schools which offer little or no foreign language instruction. The camp, Federally subsidized, attempted to determine whether children from core-schools could be stimulated into subsequent study of foreign languages.

Federal funds also financed a camp at Sun Valley, Idaho, for eight- through tenth-grade borderline foreign language students. The purpose was to reduce the rate of dropouts among rather unsuccessful first-year foreign language students.

What of the general value of language camps?

> Such camp experience plays an important role in the motivation of boys and girls. Not only do they want more of this (proven by the fact that many return for more advanced language camp experience) but they are anxious to return to their formal language work in school to learn more of the language and to show off what they have learned. In other words, the camp experience reinforces what they have learned, and it whets their appetite for more language learning. This factor alone is worth a thousand such camps. Motivation has been one of the crucial problems in language learning, where goals and outcomes take so long to attain. The learning of skills takes steady practice and a long period of time to acquire. Here, in a camping situation, goals are able to be immediately realized and attained.[4]

While the variety of summer foreign language programs is apparent, opportunities still do not exist for a vast number of students. Physical facilities are available at schools, colleges, from church or youth groups, or from private enterprise. Personnel, trained in foreign languages and skilled in teaching, can be attracted to summer programs. Financial support has already been demonstrated. Federal funds, school districts, foundations, ethnic groups, as well as interested parents have made programs financially possible.

A great deal can be achieved in connection with summer programs. A directory of existing programs would be helpful. Additional programs need energetic foreign language educators. New programs await creation by imaginative leaders.

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[3] Information can be obtained from Vernon Mauritsen, Director, Concordia College Language Camps, Moorhead, Minn.

[4] Emma Birkmaier, as quoted in *Language Camps, New Directions and Dimensions in Language Learning* (Moorhead, Minn.: Concordia Coll., 1964), pp. 5–6.